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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the interview responses of teachers and administrators in five secondary schools in Ontario (Canada) to government-initiated accountability strategies. Several questions were posed: (1) What were the perceived effects of these strategies? (2) What motives did teachers and administrators ascribe to the government for introducing them to begin with? (3) How likely was it that teachers and administrators would consider such strategies a priority for implementation in their own setting? Results indicate that the majority of respondents attributed noneducational motives to the government, though a few teachers and almost half of the administrators saw motives they could support. Similar results were apparent concerning effects of the initiatives, effects considered to be mostly neutral or negative. These same data were also examined using a theory of motivation. Conditions shaping the motivation of respondents to make the best of the accountability initiatives in their schools were mostly negative. Results are summarized in Table 1 concerning context beliefs. (Contains 25 references.) (DFR)

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Identifying And Explaining The Consequences For Schools Of External Accountability Initiatives

or

What in the world did you think I was doing before you came along?

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association
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Identifying And Explaining The Consequences For Schools Of External Accountability Initiatives[1]

There is considerable variation on the surface of reform initiatives across educational jurisdictions in developed countries at this time - changes in curriculum, student testing, school governance, funding formulae, roles and relationships of principals, and trustee power, for example. But this variation often masks fundamental similarities below the surface. For example, over the past decade, without always giving it this label, many jurisdictions have been pursuing some form of performance-based approach to large scale reform (Massell, et al, 1994).

While differing in detail across jurisdictions, performance-based approaches typically include all or most of the following components: a vision of the educated person, including goals to be accomplished by students; instruments for assessing the achievement of those goals; standards for judging the performance of students and often teachers and administrators, as well; curriculum frameworks, guidelines and related instructional material for assisting teachers; a coherent set of policies and governance structures; and an agency responsible for collecting performance data and distributing rewards and sanctions (Leithwood, Jantzi & Mascall, 2000). Kentucky, Chicago, Victoria (Australia), the UK's National Literacy and Numeracy Projects, and the Ontario government's recent education reform package all provide examples of this approach to educational change.

Performance-based approaches to large-scale reform are nothing if not comprehensive in the array of tools they use to stimulate change. Nonetheless, increasing the accountability of schools is, to advocates of this approach, what a silicon chip is to a computer or what an engine is to an automobile. Without mechanisms for increasing accountability, a performance-based approach to reform is just a hollow shell. Indeed, the

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same reform efforts are often described in different places as both "performance-based approaches" (Smith & O'Day, 1991; Odden, 1999) and instances of the "new approach to educational accountability" (Elmore, Abelman, & Fuhrman, 1996). Accountability, as Adams and Kirst point out, is viewed by many reformers "as a springboard to school improvement" (1999, p. 463).

The prevailing dominance of accountability on the agenda of educational reformers might cause one to assume that quite a lot is known about the actual effects of increasing school accountability. From a broad review of the existing literature, however, Fuhrman concluded that "much current policy...assumes a great deal about how the strategies actually work and how [educators] are likely to respond" (1996, p. 336). But educators (and parents) are a diverse group and are likely to respond in diverse ways to the same accountability initiative. Furthermore, while empirical evidence about the effects of some accountability tools has grown in the past few years (e.g., Lauder & Hughes, 1999; Lee, 1993; Leithwood & Menzies, 1998), in reference to the broad array of such tools currently in use it would be safe to say that "we don't have a clue".

This study had two broad purposes: to clarify the actual consequences, in classrooms and schools, of externally initiated accountability tools and policies; and to better understand the reasons for such consequences. Until local responses to external accountability initiatives are better understood, such initiatives stand a very good chance of just wasting time and dissipating energy, two resources in short supply in today's schools.

For purposes of this study, the consequences of accountability initiatives (both their content and the means by which they were introduced into the province's school systems) were conceived of as whatever teachers and administrators considered them to be. Of course, this cannot be considered the whole story. But these two groups of professionals are variously: the object of efforts to increase educational accountability; the intended implementors of these initiatives; and/or direct observers of the impact of

such initiatives on others (e.g., students and parents). So their views are clearly relevant. Furthermore, the roles of administrators and teachers are sufficiently different to provide several perspectives on the consequences of government accountability initiatives.

Framework

The initial framework for this study was based on a conception of accountability provided by Wagner (1981), and a four-fold classification of accountability strategies developed from a recent review of literature (Leithwood, Edge & Jantzi, 1999). The classification scheme focused our data collection efforts on specific government accountability initiatives associated with each category: market driven approaches (e.g., allowing greater choice of schools by parents and students), decentralization approaches (e.g., implementation of school councils), professional approaches (e.g., introduction of standards), and management-oriented approaches (e.g., school improvement planning). In relation to each form of accountability, Wagner's conception of accountability led us to ask questions about who is accountable, to whom, for what, and with what consequences.

This initial framework, however, proved to be of quite limited value in making sense of our data once they were collected. Especially because many of the initiatives were in the early stages of implementation, we adopted, as an additional theoretical lens, a socio-psychological account of individual motivation (Ford, 1992; Bandura, 1986). Motivational processes, according to Ford (1992), are qualities of a person oriented toward the future and aimed at helping the person to evaluate the need for change or action. These processes are a function of one's personal goals, beliefs about one's capacities, beliefs about one's context, and emotional arousal processes.

Goals. Personal goals, according to this theory, are the objects of teacher commitment and engagement, representing desired future states (aspirations, needs, wants) that have been internalized by an individual. Four conditions must prevail, however, if personal goals are to energize action toward, for example, the implementation of government accountability initiatives. Personal goals motivate action (a) when a person's evaluation of

present circumstances indicates that it is different from the desired state, and (b) when they are perceived to be hard but achievable. To have motivational effects, goals must also be (c) clear and concrete, and (d) include goals for the short term which are understood within the context of longer term and, perhaps more importantly, more obviously valuable goals.

Capacity beliefs. Two sets of "personal agency" beliefs interact with teachers' personal goals to help determine the strength of motivation to achieve such goals. The first set, capacity beliefs, includes such psychological states as self-efficacy, self-confidence, self-concept, and aspects of self-esteem. It is not enough that people have energizing goals in mind. They must also believe themselves capable of accomplishing these goals. Evidence reviewed by Bandura suggests that:

> People who see themselves as [capable or] efficacious set themselves challenges that enlist their interest and involvement in activities; they intensify their efforts when their performances fall short of their goals, make causal ascriptions for failures that support a success orientation, approach potentially threatening tasks non-anxiously, and experience little in the way of stress reactions in taxing situations. Such self-assured endeavor produces accomplishments (1986, p. 395).

Perceived capacity or self-efficacy increases the intrinsic value of effort and contributes to the possibilities for a sense of collective capability or efficacy on the part of a group, as well.

Teachers' beliefs about their own professional capacities are often eroded by taken-for-granted conditions of their work. These conditions include infrequent opportunities for teachers to receive feedback from credible colleagues about the quality of their practices as a consequence of isolated school cultures and ineffective supervisory practices (Rosenholtz, 1989). Smylie's (1990) review of research on the consequences of

teachers' beliefs about their own professional efficacy described significant relationships between such capacity beliefs and the effectiveness of classroom practices, student learning, and the likelihood of engaging in classroom and school improvement initiatives. Increased perceptions of capacity or self-efficacy may result from teachers considering information from three sources: their actual performance (specifically, perceptions of success perhaps formed through feedback from others); vicarious experience (often provided by role models); and verbal persuasion (the expressed opinions of others about one's abilities).

Context beliefs. These are beliefs about whether, in the case of teachers, for example, the school administration or the central office will actually provide the money and professional development that is needed to respond productively to an innovation. Many experienced teachers have developed considerable skepticism about aspects of the context in which they work over their careers. These beliefs arise as a consequence of their experiences with mismanaged, ill-conceived, or short lived initiatives for change (Huberman, 1988). Negative context beliefs created by these past experiences may easily graft themselves onto teachers' perceptions of current change initiatives in their schools. When this happens, teachers' motivation to implement those initiatives is significantly reduced.

Emotional arousal processes. Emotions are relatively strong feelings that are often accompanied by some physical reaction (like a faster pulse rate) - satisfaction, happiness, love, and fear, for example. These feelings have motivational value when they are associated with a personal goal that is currently influencing a person's actions. Positive emotions arise when an event promises to help meet a personal goal; negative emotions arise when chances of achieving one's goal are harmed or threatened. Whereas capacity and context beliefs are especially useful in making big decisions (e.g., "Should I actually try to use these new "benchmarks" in reporting my students' progress to their parents?"), emotions are better suited for the short term. Their main function is to create

a state of "action readiness", to stimulate immediate or vigorous action by reducing the salience of other competing issues or concerns.

Emotions also may serve to maintain patterns of action. Indeed, this may be their most important function in relation to restructuring initiatives. As teachers engage from day to day in efforts to restructure, those efforts will be sustained by a positive emotional climate. Conditions supporting such a climate are likely to include, for example, frequent positive feedback from parents and students about their experiences with the school's change initiatives, frequent positive feedback from one's teaching colleagues and other school leaders about one's success in achieving short-term goals associated with change initiatives, and a dynamic and changing job. In short, emotional arousal processes help teachers persist in attempting to accomplish long range goals when evidence of progress is meager. These processes also help maintain effective practices under less than favorable conditions.

In sum, it is not enough for teachers or administrators to have personal professional goals compatible with implementation of the change initiatives, in this case, government accountability initiatives. They must also believe themselves personally capable of achieving those goals, and believe that their school environments will provide the support that they require. It doesn't hurt, either, if experiences with the initiatives are fun, exciting, satisfying, and otherwise emotionally engaging.

Method

Evidence reported in this paper was drawn from a larger study of educational accountability. Our description of research methods, however, is limited to the data reported in this paper. These were data collected from a total of 48 teachers and 15 school administrators selected in approximately equal numbers from 5 secondary schools in south-central Ontario. Schools were located in four large districts (80,000 to 300,000 students) geographically close to the university, and as a group represented both public (2 districts) and separate school (2 districts) contexts. Schools within these districts were

selected by the districts because they volunteered to participate in response to information distributed about the study. Teachers within schools were selected randomly. Administrators included the principal/vice principal administrative team for each school.

A semi-structured interview (*Accountability In Schools Interview Schedule*) was used to collect data from teachers and administrators (two forms). Neither the interview questions nor the initial coding of data were explicitly shaped by the theory of motivation described above. Rather, informed by our prior research (Leithwood, Edge & Jantzi, 1999), questions were framed as closely as possible to the ways in which teachers and administrators typically thought and talked about accountability issues. Relatively open-ended questions inquired about teachers' beliefs about the government's motives for its accountability initiatives, their effects (experienced and anticipated), and explanations of those effects. Care was taken to ensure that unanticipated responses and opinions had a chance to surface during the interviews. All interview data were audiotaped, transcribed, and coded using the interview questions as the primary coding scheme.

Results

This section is divided into three main parts. Reported in the first part is a summary of teachers' and administrators' responses to the 15 government accountability strategies they identified.[2] The foci of these data are the motives attributed to the government for its initiatives, and the perceived (or anticipated) effects of these initiatives. In the second part a more detailed analysis of responses to four specific accountability initiatives is outlined. In the third and final part of this section, evidence reported in parts one and two is reexamined through the lens of the theory of motivation described earlier.

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[2] The fifteen strategies identified are: initiatives in general, program reform, provincial testing, teacher testing, report cards, literacy test, evaluation rubrics, increasing teachers' workload, school council, outcomes-based learning, Ontario College of Teachers, reduction of secondary schools from 5 to 4 years, teacher advisory program, changing the tax base, capping average class sizes at 22.

Responses To Government Accountability Strategies As A Whole

Motives. Teachers and administration made approximately the same proportion of comments coded as government motives: 37 of 48 teachers made 109 such comments as compared with 11 of 15 administrators who made 30 such comments. Teachers averaged 2.9 such comments per person as compared with 2.7 for administrators.

The majority of teacher comments expressed disbelief that the government's accountability initiatives were motivated by educational concerns. Instead, such motives were perceived to be either "political" in nature (44% of responses), aimed at achieving greater consistency across schools (16%), making teachers more accountable (15%), or increasing parent involvement (11%). Only three comments attributed to the government an intent to improve teacher effectiveness, and only 13 comments (12%) identified an intent to benefit students (6 of these comments were explicitly connected to student learning).

Administrator respondents held less skeptical views of the governments' motives than did teachers. Of their 30 comments coded as "government motives", 53% identified student benefits with about two thirds of these referring explicitly to student learning. Albeit less frequently, administrators, nonetheless, did identify many of the same non-educational motives as teachers: "politics" (17% of comments); achieving greater consistency (10%); and making teachers or schools more accountable (17%). One comment was made about increasing teacher effectiveness as a motive.

Perceptions of effects. Forty-seven teachers and all 15 administrators made comments coded as "effects of government accountability initiatives". Teachers made a total of 374 comments of which 78, or 21%, were neutral (e.g., "hasn't yet begun", "mixed feelings", "we've had meetings"), 56 or, 15%, were positive (e.g., "good idea", "has interesting aspects", "potential benefit for parents and students"); and 240 or 64% were negative (e.g., "not an effective strategy", "we're not prepared", "too much work", "parents and students will suffer").

Administrators made a total of 121 comments, of which 36 (30%) were neutral; 31 (26%) were positive; and 54 (45%) were negative. While the relative distribution of responses across the three categories (neutral, positive and negative) were similar for teachers and administrators, administrators were more likely to express positive and neutral effects overall. Negative comments by teachers about the effects of government accountability initiatives ranged from 37% to 90% with 10 out of 15 initiatives (67%) having 60% or more negative comments. For administrators the range was 7% to 100% with 5 out of 12 strategies (42%) having 60% or more negative comments.

Anxiety caused by the pressure of uncertainty was the most prevalent, specific negative effect noted by teachers. Across all categories of initiatives, 35 teachers worried about what the changes will mean and wondered if they would be ready to implement policy. Thirty-three teachers expressed frustration mainly due to not having enough resources, information, and time for proper implementation. Thirty-one teachers complained about the ineffectiveness of the initiative for accomplishing its intended purposes, and 30 teachers complained that their own practices were impeded by the increased workload created by government accountability initiatives. Teachers were annoyed (25), primarily at the government, for not being accountable for their own initiatives, and teachers reported stress (22) because so much was happening so quickly. Public misperceptions and uninformed reactions were negative effects according to 24 teachers. Twenty-one teachers felt that the initiatives constituted an attack on their professionalism, and 17 indicated a concern about possible negative effects on students.

Forty teachers reported no effects of government accountability initiatives, as yet, and 29 said that they would manage to deal with the initiatives. Twenty-seven teachers thought there was something good about nearly all of the strategies.

Administrators, too, expressed frustration. For them, it was due to incomplete information for providing inservice to their staff (10). They were also upset at the attack on the professionalism of teachers (9) and anxious about how they were going to deal

with teachers' resistance to change (8). Overall, though, administrators were more positive about the effects of government accountability initiatives than were teachers, for example: 41% of teachers who talked about curriculum reform made positive comments, 54% of administration did so; 31% of teachers who talked about provincial testing effects made positive comments, 67% of administration did so; 50% of teachers who talked about the effects of report cards made positive comments, 67% of administration did so).

Responses About Four Selected Accountability Strategies

The purpose of this section is to provide a more detailed picture of the results summarized above. To do this, we report teachers' and administrators' responses to four of the 15 strategies about which we have data (program reform, provincial testing, teacher testing, and report cards). These four strategies were selected because teacher and administrator responses to them illustrate important features of the larger data set. For each strategy, the range of specific accountability practices is described along with their purposes and effects, from the perspective of teachers and administrators.

Program reform. When asked what the province has done, if anything, that influences their accountability, twenty-nine teachers named recent changes to the secondary school program. Included among these changes or "reforms" were the establishment of applied and academic streams, a common curriculum, new profiles for grade nine students, new curriculum guidelines at all grade levels, co-op education, credit for volunteer work, and an increased focus on technology.

A total of 14 teachers commented on government motives for this set of accountability initiatives. Five teachers thought the motivation was political in nature, a "political ploy pandering to business interests" (5). Eight teachers thought the purpose was to achieve consistency in curriculum across the province; one of these believed such consistency aimed at standardizing teaching in order to gain "complete control". One teacher each suggested that the Government considered it "time for a change", and time to make teachers and schools more accountable. Only four of the 14 teachers explicitly

associated government motives with the improvement of teaching and learning ("providing an appropriate curriculum for all students", and achieving a "vision of a better education").

Six respondents were unable to see any effects of government curriculum reform because the reforms had not begun in their schools or were not perceived to be different from existing practice. Six reacted with mixed feelings saying they did not have a choice. Two teachers said they would use personal judgment. "I try to take what the government says and mold it into something I can live with." On the other hand, eleven teachers (seven from one school) were pleased about some aspects of the curriculum reform effort although only one teacher could see any positive benefits for students (achievement will benefit from higher expectations). Among the positive effects attributed to the curriculum reform were: its encouragement of consistency across the province (1); its "interesting" nature (1); the in-service opportunities accompanying the reform(1); and its more rigorous expectations (1). One respondent suggested that new student profiles, included as part of the reform, provided good detail and illustration but needed to be personalized. Five teachers in one school claimed that introduction of the curriculum reforms had lead to greater teacher collaboration:

> [The reform initiatives are] bringing us together to sit down as departments and developing curriculum instead of each of us off on our own tangent doing what interests [us].

Two teachers believed that "it was time" for the changes proposed by the reform.

Twenty teachers made 59 comments concerning the negative effects of the curriculum reform initiatives. These comments were about negative effects on teachers' dispositions, practices, and sense of professionalism; the comments also concerned curriculum content, and students. With respect to dispositions, four teachers experienced stress mainly because they believed there were too many changes introduced too quickly. Teachers complained of being frustrated by insufficient information (8), not enough resources or

inservices (5), not enough time to develop programs in their own schools (4), difficulty in complying with the Government directives (2), and being unprepared (4). One teacher was frustrated because, although the department head was working on the initiatives, he was not fully qualified. Two teachers were annoyed, one because there seemed to be no way to hold the government accountable for its own curriculum reforms, the other because of the amount of time and money spent for what was perceived to be little positive outcome. Eight teachers were anxious because there were too many uncertainties surrounding the reforms. These teachers worried about whether or not they would be ready, would they get proper inservicing, would students be negatively affected, would they get the support they needed.

Four comments from three teachers were about the effects of the curriculum reforms on their practices. One teacher was unhappy with the new program because it seemed that the Government was preparing a "how-to book that left no room for [my own] artistry". Two teachers were dismayed to see that their subjects were cut, and one worried that the course profiles may not suit her style of teaching.

Other negative effects reported by six teachers concerned the impact of the reforms on their sense of professionalism. One of these teachers claimed to be insulted because his advice was initially taken but subsequently dismissed without consultation. Four teachers expressed dismay: two were unhappy because they could not be as accountable as they would like to be: said one, "because we cannot comply, our accountability drops", and one argued that. "I can't be accountable for something I have no input in". One teacher felt that the profession was demeaned because "people who are making decisions are not in the classroom anymore. The Government is out of touch". One teacher was afraid that the "cookbook approach" to curriculum will attract the wrong people to the profession. Finally, one teacher expressed a loss of professional self-efficacy because "we don't feel confident that we can deliver the program that needs to be delivered". Two teachers suggested that they had lost credibility because parents are told

to expect "great things" but teachers do not have the information required to deliver on such expectations.

Two teachers had reservations about the content of the curriculum reforms: the establishment of applied and academic streams does not "reflect the realities of our society" (1), and the common curriculum does not adequately recognize diversity (1). Only two teachers reported negative effects on students. One teacher said that "a lot of students don't fit into either the academic or applied programs", and the other worried that the loss of a business credit in the new program would mean less preparation for students going into the business world.

All 15 administrators cited the recent changes to the secondary school program as a government accountability initiative with eight of those providing information about the Government's motives. For the most part, those assumed motives were the same as the motives attributed by teachers, i.e., a re-election strategy (1) "to reflect what the public wants."; a power grab (1); skepticism (2), "are they really interested in improving curriculum given the cutbacks?" ; to increase consistency (2); it's time for a change (2); and to make schools more accountable (1). Three administrators believed the motivation was to improve the quality of education, to provide curricula appropriate to individual learning styles , and to introduce clear objectives at each grade level.

Thirteen administrators described effects of Government accountability initiatives. Three claimed, however, that it was too soon to see effects, or that the initiatives were not sufficiently different from current practice to warrant expecting noticeable effects. Four vice principals talked about their responsibility for ensuring everyone was properly inserviced. Two administrators simply said there was no choice and one vice principal mentioned the responsibility to provide proof of implementation to parents. Seven administrators were pleased with the initiative because: teachers have an opportunity to write curriculum which should have a positive effect on the system (1); significant inservice has been provided by the Government (1); most schools will have no difficulty

meeting the guidelines (1); given the new grade 9/10 course, some students will be better prepared for the co-op program (1); the new curriculum is good (5).

Six administrators described negative effects. Two expressed frustration which they attributed to implementation difficulties (e.g. inadequate inservices, insufficient information, and no textbooks). Two vice principals described the stress of having to deal with "too much, too fast." One wondered if , "given the [political] climate, are we setting ourselves up for failure." Two principals admitted that the new applied/academic streaming was not working.

Provincial testing and the ranking of schools. Twenty teachers mentioned province-wide achievement testing, and the use of results to rank schools, as an accountability tool of the government. Although at the time of our interviews, such testing had not actually been undertaken in secondary schools, elementary schools in the province had several years experience with such initiatives (undertaken by a provincial agency called the Educational Quality and Accountability Office). Results in elementary schools had been routinely published in the media, usually in the form of "league tables" in most districts. So while such testing was not scheduled to arrive in secondary schools for another one or two year period, at least some of its outcomes were no mystery. Secondary schools also had recent prior experience with some occasional provincial testing in language that had produced within-district ranking of secondary schools by local media.

Improving student achievement (by making sure that students learned the provincial curriculum) was a motive attributed to the Government for launching province-wide testing by only one teacher. Nine additional motives were attributed to the Government for this set of accountability initiatives. One teacher opined that it was a re-election strategy ; "[the testing initiative provided] good little political sound bites. The public likes to see that". Four teachers were just generally skeptical about the motives. For example, one said, "we don't know why they've got the tests. I mean they say one thing but obviously I think they mean another." One believed it was to establish consistency

across the province. Two teachers thought it was to make teachers and schools more accountable and one teacher thought that the tests were implemented to help parents make school choices.

Thirteen teachers mentioned consequences, both positive and negative, which they associated with the student testing initiative even though their direct experience of such testing was limited. Four teachers thought such testing was a good idea: for example, one suggested that it would be good to provide consistency across the province and one was of the view that such testing would help her diagnose student needs. One of these teachers also anticipated that such testing could be used for planning or improvement purposes.

Negative effects outweighed positive effects by a factor of more than 3 to 1, however, and all teachers who pointed to the possibility of some positive effects mentioned negative effects, as well. These were effects on teachers' dispositions and practices, students, parents, and the content of the curriculum.

One teacher was annoyed at the prospect of provincial testing because "it drives me crazy" when kids ask how they compare to provincial standards. Seven teachers felt anxious about the tests: one was uncertain about how the tests would be implemented; three were worried that teachers would teach to the test; two were concerned about possible manipulation of data; and four talked about the negative rumours they had heard about the elementary school experience. One teacher talked about the difficulty in preparing kids from different cultures for a common test of the sort she expected. Similarly, two teachers felt that such testing was not equitable to all students; students from low SES homes would be disadvantaged and disadvantaged students would be stigmatized.

Five teachers identified negative effects of province-wide testing on parents and the wider community. Teachers spoke of the inevitable media distortion (1) and resulting confusion (1) for parents about the significance of the results. Five teachers felt that

parents' reactions to the publicized results were unwarranted, such data were being misused ("People are buying and selling houses on the basis of tests"). Two teachers felt "media biases" stigmatize schools unfairly (2), and the publication of the results, subsequent parental reaction and possible competition among schools (2) would result in the closing of schools which would be disadvantageous for communities.

Nine teachers pointed to shortcomings in the tests themselves - they do not measure what students have learned (3). And the results that they provide do not allow valid comparisons to be made among schools (4), nor are they meaningful without further information to help in their interpretation (3).

Six administrators cited this accountability initiative, but only one principal and one vice principal from one school offered motivations for it and all four comments were related to teaching and learning. Those motives that were mentioned included: collecting baseline data; ensuring that students have learned the curriculum; ensuring that standards are maintained; and making sure the curriculum is taught.

Three administrators offered both positive and negative effects. One principal, although noting it was too soon to detect specific effects, decried ranking because schools in low SES areas would be disadvantaged and ranking, in general, destroys morale. A second principal did not like to put too much weight on standardized tests partly because parents make major life decisions based on the results. That principal also claimed that, even though the tests might be good, teachers can teach to the test. Positive effects included: being able to track the progress of students regardless of SES and to "bring an air of accountability back to evaluation." The vice principal thought that the tests would "make teachers feel that it's important to teach the curriculum."

Teacher testing and the "war on teachers". Testing and recertifying teachers every 3-5 years was a Government accountability strategy identified by 18 teachers. At the time of data collection, however, such testing had not yet to be implemented, so evidence about teacher testing reported by our interviewees is not based on their direct experience with

this approach to accountability. The Government had announced its intention to develop and implement such testing and had assigned the task to the provincial college of teachers (OCOT). At the time of writing this paper, OCOT had not found a suitable approach to the task. Rather, it had outlined a range of alternatives for the government's consideration (Professionally Speaking, March 2000). Indeed after considerable research, it had indicated to the government that there was no evidence to suggest that such a tool would result in improved teaching. The government's response was to tell the college that, one way or another, there would be a test and to get on with it.

Also included within this category of accountability tools was a recent spate of what respondents identified as "teacher bashing" by the government, and general, mostly media-based, teacher scrutiny in the province. One teacher captured his impression of this "tool" as follows:

> "I would say that the whole political climate that's been created in the last couple of years is having a big impact and I think that's a tool toward accountability.....I think the shots that are being lobbed at teachers and education through the media, through being forced into strikes,... there seems to be a war that this government is having with various sectors of our public servants".

Ten teachers ascribed motives to the Government for these accountability initiatives, most expressing considerable cynicism. Its a re-election strategy, said four teachers: ("[The government wants to] persuade the public that they want to make sure that teachers are competent to teach the curriculum that they're asked to teach"). It's a power grab, said another ("I [think it's about] who has the power; who's going to wield it"). And, somewhat tongue in cheek, three teachers noted that teacher scrutiny was "ostensibly to improve student learning". But none of the teachers seemed to actually believe that such testing was being promoted by the government as a means to this end.

Of the 13 teachers who provided opinions about the anticipated effects of this category of accountability tools, three reported positive and 13 reported negative effects. Three teachers were pleased with the idea and thought it was at least "interesting" in theory. If it was implemented well, these teachers could see some potential in it for improving teaching.

Some anticipated negative effects concerned teacher dispositions and sense of professionalism. Two teachers expressed frustration, one because of what was expected to be a poor implementation strategy, the other because "the union gets in the way of accountability." Three teachers were anxious because of uncertainty about what the initiatives would entail. Six teachers were insulted by this initiative because they felt their professionalism was being called into questioned ("It discredits what a teacher does") They felt that the Government must not value their training and that there did not seem to be any acknowledgment that teachers generally take courses and are continually trying to improve.

Nine teachers explained why they thought teacher testing was wrong. Five said it would not be an effective way to evaluate teachers. For example:

> When you're asking staff to be recertified, do you test my ability to have compassion for a student, or my ability to deal with a parent or to deal with a very difficult situation and doing it with sensitivity and doing it with heart?

A written test wouldn't be able to measure pedagogy or charismatic delivery of curriculum. Six teachers thought that such a test would result in no better teaching or even greater teacher accountability. One teacher objected to teacher testing on the grounds that it would not provide opportunities for growth ("teachers learn by observing.") And another considered the tests to be unnecessary because "we already have an evaluation mechanism." Two teachers were of the view that teacher testing "feeds into the public misperception of teachers not being accountable".

Five administrators mentioned this accountability strategy, but only one offered a Government motive which was to "force" teacher accountability. All mentioned effects, although one said nothing had happened yet. All three administrators in one school were annoyed by this initiative because teachers feel "they've been assessed to death." They also blamed teacher demoralization on the media's constant portrayal of teachers in a negative light. "Teachers", noted one principal, "feel their profession is under attack." One principal in another school was not paying attention to the testing because "in this school, until further notice, teachers are accountable to the principal."

Report cards. An initiative introduced by the government for both elementary and secondary schools, a standardized provincial report card required the reporting of student progress in terms of both the content and performance standards specified in the curriculum for each subject. It also required marks for achievement to be quite separate from marks for effort, attitude and other non-achievement related matters. Furthermore, mandatory use of the report card necessitated teachers entering their marks and comments on a computer program provided to each school. Support for learning how to use the program varied widely across the province. At the time of data collection, secondary school staffs were having their first year of experience with this new reporting mechanism

Seventeen teachers identified the provincial report card as a Government accountability strategy and eight of them offered eleven comments regarding their perceptions about the Government's motives for introducing this new accountability tool. Four teachers pointed to consistency in evaluation, one pointed to "pressure from the parents", one said it was "cosmetic" and not about accountability. Teachers also believed the report card was intended by the Government to make teachers and schools more accountable (2), to provide more details about the student in different areas (3), and to better reflect the actual value of students' work (i.e. marks would not be taken off for lateness).

With respect to the perceived effects of the provincial report card, eight teachers explicitly acknowledged that they were unavoidable. Two teachers said that they would need to know more about the students; two mentioned that they had had some inservice; one said "we have to adapt...It is something we have to work through." Another teacher talked explicitly about "wrinkles" that needed to be ironed out in relation to expectations for students such as trying to find a balance between not insisting on deadlines and needing to have the work handed in within a reasonable timeline. Two teachers said it was making them more accountable. These comments reflect a willingness to approach the new report cards in a flexible manner. A second group of three teachers thought that the new report card was a good idea because they could understand the rationale or philosophy behind it or because it would create consistency across the province.

Seven teachers thought that the impact of the report card would be positive because it provides more information (both academic and attitudinal) about students (4), provides marks better reflecting students' abilities (1); and because it forces teachers to observe their students more carefully.

Negative effects, also were reported by seven teachers, had to do with stress and anxiety. These feelings they traced to having too many students to report on (2) lack of information (1), not enough time (1), difficulty complying with the demands of the report card (3), and poor implementation strategies by the Government. One teacher made three different comments suggesting anxiety related to all the unknowns surrounding the new report card. One teacher felt that the new way of reporting grades was unfair to students who did hand their assignments in on time, since the report card provided little opportunity to reward students for such things.

Ten administrators cited the new report card as an accountability tool, but only three speculated about the Government's motivation. One said it was to make schools more accountable; one said it was to promote consistency across the province; and one said it was to please parents. These motivations were also mentioned by teachers.

Six administrators described effects. One thought they were not as detailed as they could be and one thought they will be a challenge. Other neutral comments were that the report card will have an immediate impact on students in grade 9 (1) and that the report card was piloted in her school (1). That principal claimed to have not seen much stress from her teachers because they are professionals. One vice principal mentioned the responsibility to train staff to complete the reports and another said that now teachers will be able to do report cards at home.

Motivation Theory As A Lens On Results

Table 1 summarizes, in a reorganized way, responses to the four government accountability initiatives described above in relation to the constructs included in the theory of motivation which served as a framework for our study (personal goals, capacity beliefs, context beliefs, and emotional arousal processes). Responses likely to have a positive influence on motivation begin with the designation "+", those with a negative influence are preceded with a "-".

As Table 1 makes clear, most of the initiatives are perceived by at least some teachers and administrators to arise from motivations on the part of the government not likely to be closely aligned with their own personal professional goals. These are motivations unrelated to the improvement of teaching and learning. In addition, at least some teachers and administrators could not see much difference between existing practices and the practices advocated by the initiatives (no "gap" to be reduced), and anticipated possible negative effects on students. Respondents' perceptions of the motivations giving rise to the initiatives was not all negative, however. Some respondents could imagine the initiatives adding value to what they were already doing, meeting a felt need, and having some potentially interesting, if not well specified, outcomes.

So one might conclude from this evidence that even though non alignment with personal goals was the dominant impression, the motivation to implement the initiatives might have been (perhaps still could be) significantly enhanced if stronger connections

could have been made with some perceived motives rather than others. Evidence from our larger study, as well as evidence reported by others (e.g., Kenan, 2000), makes clear that not only do teachers believe that they are primarily accountable to students and parents, but that they are likely to rank the government last among the agencies to whom they feel they should be accountable.

In sum, because the majority of our respondents, especially the teachers, were unable to see the contribution of the government's accountability initiatives to the improvement of teaching and learning, they found little that resonated with their own personal professional goals. Although not explicit in Table 1, however, a small minority of teachers (especially from one school), and a majority of administrators did associate some of the governments initiatives with goals close to their own.

Almost all evidence from the interviews relevant to capacity beliefs, as Table 1 indicates, was negative. With the exception of some inservice (probably provided by the school or district), the government's actions surrounding their accountability initiatives conspired to erode teachers sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their work generally, as well as in their ability to respond productively to the specific accountability initiatives of the government. The negative (many would say "brutally negative") orientation of the Ontario provincial government to teachers' abilities and contributions first became notorious when the Minister of Education of the day was captured on video during a presentation to Ministry staff in which he claimed that if there was no crisis in education in the province, he was just the man to create one (Bedard & Lawton, 1998).

This, of course, is a strategy often used by educational reformers and politicians attempting to build public support for their educational platforms (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). And while the strategy may, in the short term, undermine unwanted organizational stability or upset a dysfunctional equilibrium resistant to change, its long term consequences seem mostly damaging to the goal of authentic school improvement. Not to mention unethical. Furthermore, strategies for initiating large-scale reform in organizations

that, at the same time, undermine the trust organizational members have in their leaders are cancerous for subsequent efforts to implement and institutionalize that reform (Webb, 1996).

Results summarized in Table 1 concerning context beliefs are also uniformly negative. Few teachers or administrators believed that they were likely to have at their disposal the resources (time, information, inservice they thought would be needed to implement any of the four government accountability strategies. Nor did they anticipate any moral support from the media, public, or government. These data suggest that even under conditions in which there was a strong correspondence between the purposes for the accountability initiatives and teacher personal goals, and a robust sense of efficacy on teachers' parts about their own capacities, that reactions to the initiatives would still be negative. Most likely the initiatives would be viewed as "unrealistic".

Our data suggest, however, that a relatively modest revision in the timelines for implementation, a revision entailing little or no cost, could have had a large effect on some teachers' and administrators' context beliefs. This is especially the case with many of the initiatives classified as program reform. From a quarter to a third of interviewees noted that there were aspects of these initiatives that they agreed with and that were, in fact, overdue. But the changes were being introduced far too quickly, a response which finds support in the empirical evidence about timelines for change (Fullan, 2000), usually interpreted to mean that significant change in schools is a three- to five-year proposition.

Emotional arousal processes, the final construct in our motivation theory, foster motivation and commitment when the implementation of an initiative is associated with positive feelings. As Table 1 makes clear, however, nothing could be farther from the experience of teachers in our sample and often administrators, as well. Instead, the emotions that they associated with the government's accountability initiatives were frustration, stress, annoyance, anxiety and insult.

It needs to be pointed out, however, that these specific accountability initiatives were introduced during a time of unprecedented conflict and hostility between the province's teachers and the government on many fronts; the province had experienced its first province-wide teacher strike only a year earlier, for example. So the emotions associated with the four accountability initiatives by our interviewees might well have arisen in response to a host of other matters involving the government; they may not have been provoked, initially, by these accountability initiatives.

Summary And Conclusion

This study inquired about teachers' and administrators' responses to government-initiated accountability strategies. What were the perceived effects of these strategies? What motives did teachers and administrators ascribe to the government for introducing them to begin with?, and How likely was it that teachers and administrators would consider such strategies a priority for implementation in their own settings? Evidence was provided through interviews with teachers and administrators in five secondary schools in Ontario.

Results of the study were summarized in two forms. The first form aimed to reflect respondents views in as phenomenologically sensitive manner as possible; these results summarized what respondents believed were the government's motives for introducing the accountability strategy, and what respondents believed the effects of those initiatives were on their classes and schools. The majority of respondents attributed non-educational motives to the government, although a few teachers and almost half of the administrators could see motives that they could support. Similar results were apparent concerning effects of the initiatives, effects considered to be mostly neutral or negative. A small number of teachers and more administrators identified effects that they believed were worthwhile, however.

These same data were also examined through the lens of a theory of motivation. Based on the work of Bandura (1986) and Ford (1992), this theory explains individual

motivation in terms of personal goals, capacity beliefs, context beliefs, and emotional arousal processes. From this perspective, conditions shaping the motivation of teachers and administrators to make the best of the accountability initiatives in their schools were mostly negative. A few teachers and approximately half of the administrators did ascribe some purposes for the government's strategies with goals that they could endorse. But conditions associated with all other elements of motivation made it unlikely the government's initiatives would willingly become a priority for implementation.

The word "willingly" is a critical qualifier in this prediction. Each of the four accountability initiatives we selected to focus on is now "being implemented" in most schools across the province. That is to say, they have all been legislated for use - attention is being paid. In the case of the provincial report card, for example, teachers have had no choice over the past year but to report to parents using this form. In the case of province-wide achievement tests, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) has collected several rounds of data from all elementary schools and reported back results to districts. Predictably, the media have consumed these results with great enthusiasm, publishing "league tables" unadjusted for variation in the family backgrounds of students, even though this is not very hard to do (see Clotfelter & Ladd, 1996, for instructions).

These examples demonstrate that legislated implementation is possible. Furthermore, some may consider such implementation to be evidence that schools are being "reformed" – and quickly (perhaps even before the next election). But this is a far cry from being able to claim that teaching and learning in schools is improving. That is what many of our respondents were saying and that is what much of the relevant evidence now reported by others seems to be telling us, also. Examples of reform initiatives legislated into implementation as a part of performance-based large scale reform efforts for which evidence of impact is negative or questionable include: school choice and related policies (Lauder & Hughes, 1999; Lee, Croninger, & Smith, 1994), school councils and site-based

management (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998), high stakes student testing (Clotfelter & Ladd, 1996), student standards (Ohanian, 1999), and school inspection (Kenan, 2000).

We do not interpret this disappointing evidence to mean that initiatives such as these have no potential. Rather, we argue (see also Fullan, 2000) that without active advocacy, support, contextual refinement, and further development by those "in the trenches" there is little chance of them enhancing the educational experiences of children. These are things governments cannot legislate: support must be earned, special expertise must be respected, hubris must be resisted, and ignorance must be acknowledged. Historically, the profession of teaching has attracted a disproportionate number of people extraordinarily dedicated to the mission of childrens' welfare; most other types of organizations can only dream of approaching such levels of dedication to their corporate missions. Reform-minded governments would do well to consider what is to be lost by squandering such a resource, and what the costs would be of finding an equally effective replacement.

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Gov't. Account. Initiative	Personal Goals	Capacity Beliefs	Context Beliefs	Emotional Arousal Processes
Program Reform	-no gap with existing practices -possible negative effects on students -questionable curriculum content +aligned with felt needs +add value to existing practices +increased collaboration with colleagues	-feeling unprepared -challenges to professional discretion -challenges to sense of professionalism -concerns about value of exisiting teaching practices -lack of confidence in implementation.	-insufficient information -inadequate resources -unrealistic timelines -uncertain access to in-service	-feelings of stress, annoyance, frustration, anxiety
Provincial Testing and Ranking of Schools	-gv't motives not about teaching and learning -narrow the curriculum -questionable validity -inequitable effects on students +intent to improve student achievement +aligned with felt needs +add value to existing practices	-increases difficulty of doing job -pressure to teach to the test -possible effects on morale	-misuses of data by media -unhelpful reactions by some parents -stigmatization of schools	-feelings of annoyance
Teacher Testing and "The War on Teachers"	-belief that initiative will not improve teaching -no gap with existing practices -non-educational goals for the initiative +idea considered "interesting and potentially useful: may add value	-constant government criticism of schools and teachers -feelings that professionalism being called into question; gvt. does not value contribution	-generally critical attitude of the government toward public education	-feelings of frustration, anxiety -insulted by initiative
Provincial Report Cards	-non educational goals for the initiative -cosmetic +add value to existing practices: better reflect student work +agreement with underlying philosophy	+some inservice provided -difficulty in complying with demands of implementation	-some difficulties expected during implementation -lack of time -lack of information	-feelings of stress and anxiety

Table 1